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Office of Program Resources Management

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April 20, 2008

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ECONOMIC GROWTH

(Energy and Environment)

Reading to children about Mother Earth

By Kate V. Pedroso

(Source: Philippine Daily Inquirer News Online – 4/20/08)

MANILA, Philippines—Stories about nature and conserving Mother Earth took center stage at Friday’s special Inquirer Read-Along session in celebration of Earth Month.

Featured readers were United States Embassy Charge d’Affaires Paul Jones, sibling singers Nina and King, and Alitaptap storyteller Rich Rodriguez.

More than 60 children attended the session held in the cinema lobby of Robinsons Galleria in Quezon City. They listened to stories about alternative sources of energy and ways of caring for nature. Three environmental plays were staged.

Jones, who came with his wife Catherine and their two children Aleksandra and Hale, read “Felix and Fely,” a story of two siblings who learn about alternative energy sources, like the sun and wind, when they visit their grandparents’ farm.

“I think this is a terrific program because it promotes reading and it promotes protecting the environment,” said Jones. “When I open the newspaper and see the stories about this reading program, it reminds me to read to my children that day and I think it probably does that to a lot of parents.”

Nina and King, on the other hand, presented “Pupils Power,” a story about students who learn about the ill effects of vehicular pollution and later on prompt their parents to advocate the use of biofuels.

King noted that the children's warm reception and active participation pushed his sister to go on despite feeling ill.

"We were happy about the children because they really listened," Nina added. "Whenever we asked questions, they were all raising their hands energetically."

Teaching modules

Both "Felix and Fely" and "Pupils Power" were written by Dymphna Leizel Jocson, head teacher at the Quintin Salas Elementary School in Jaro, Iloilo, as part of teaching modules on alternative energy developed for Grade 1 students of the Department of Education Division of Iloilo City.

The teaching modules were a product of the Sustainable Energy Module Development activity of the Sustainable Energy Development Program.

"When I first heard that we were supposed to do a lesson plan integrating the concepts of renewable energy and biofuels, I thought it would be really difficult because it would include a lot of technical terms," said Jocson, who flew all the way from Iloilo to attend yesterday's Read-Along.

"I believe children could be instrumental in educating their parents. We know they have their own convincing powers," Jocson added.

Meanwhile, returning Alitaptap volunteer reader Rodriguez read "Emang Engkantada at ang Tatlong Haragan," a story about three hard-headed kids who refuse to care for the environment, and "Ang Unang Baboy sa Langit," which was about a pig who reached heaven by virtue of his cleanliness. Both stories were written by the late Rene O. Villanueva and were published by Adarna.

Short plays

The Read-Along session was part of a series of events celebrating Earth Day, which will be marked worldwide on April 22. Last Tuesday, SEDP in partnership with Fuels for Life Movement partners, which included Junior Inquirer, Center for Environmental Education, E-artistshop Global Inc. and Miss Earth Foundation, launched the staging of three environmental short plays. Kenney and other US Embassy and USAID officials participated in the play as characters.

All the plays—Fuels for Life, Eco-defenders vs. Global Warming and Kings of the Road—were initially launched as cinema ads and storybooks and were read and featured in Read-Along last year.

The special Read-Along session was in cooperation with SEDP, Robinsons Movieworld, Krispy Kreme, C2 and Universal Robina Corp., San Miguel Brewery, Inc., Hands-On Manila, Virlanie Foundation and Adarna House.

Launched in May by Inquirer Research, Inquirer Library and Junior Inquirer, the program aims to teach children aged 7-13 to love reading through storytelling sessions.

The next Read-Along at the Inquirer office in Makati will be on April 26 and will feature TV personality and author Christine Bersola.

Admission is on first-come, first-served basis. Contact Ellen Caparros or Girlie Refran at 8978808, local 329. *With a report from Schatzi Quodala, Inquirer Research*